

We Claim:

1. A method of instant messaging, comprising the steps of:

providing a plurality of messaging clients capable of transmitting instant
5 messages to one another;

each of the plurality of messaging clients configured to share presence
information with one another via a network; and

for each of the plurality of messaging clients, determining whether the
messaging client is in a state in which it is receptive to receiving presence
10 information from the other messaging clients, and if so, then receiving presence
information for each of the other messaging clients via the network.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

for each of the plurality of messaging clients, setting a communication
15 timer to a predetermined value that, when expired, will put the messaging client
into an unknown state in which it is not receptive to receiving presence
information from each of the other messaging clients.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

for each of the plurality of messaging clients, detecting a trigger signal indicating that the messaging client should be put into an unknown state in which it is not receptive to receiving presence information from each of the other
5 messaging clients.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting presence information directly from each of the plurality of messaging clients to the other messaging clients without using an intermediate
10 server.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

transmitting presence information from each of the plurality of messaging clients to an intermediate server system and storing the presence information in a
15 data store at the intermediate server;

the intermediate server system processing the presence information in the data store to determine whether or not to propagate presence information for the plurality of messaging clients to each of the individual messaging clients represented by the presence information in the data store.

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6. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

each of the plurality of messaging clients having a buddy list of other messaging clients with which the messaging client is interested in communicating with;

5 when the messaging client is in a state in which it is receptive to receiving presence information, then obtaining presence information for each of the other messaging clients on the buddy list.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the network is a wide area wireless network.

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8. The method of claim 1, wherein the presence information is communicated between the plurality of messaging clients via a proxy server coupled to the network.

15 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the proxy server maintains a presence information database storing current presence information for each of the plurality of messaging clients.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

20 the proxy server propagating presence information to each of the plurality of messaging clients unless the presence information database indicates that a

particular messaging client is in a state indicating that it is not receptive to receiving presence information.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

5 transmitting instant messages between two of the messaging clients having presence information regarding one another.

12. The method of claim 3, wherein the trigger signal is generated when an instant messaging application is turned off.

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13. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

 determining that at least one of the messaging clients is no longer capable of communicating via the network; and

 not providing presence information for the other messaging clients to the
15 at least one of the messaging clients via the network until it is determined that the at least one of the messaging clients is capable of communicating via the network.

14. An instant messaging system, comprising:

 a plurality of messaging clients capable of transmitting instant messages to
20 one another, wherein each of the plurality of messaging clients is configured to share presence information with one another via a network; and

means for determining whether each messaging client is in a state in which it is receptive to receiving presence information from the other messaging clients, and if so, then for transmitting presence information for each of the other messaging clients via the network.

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15. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

a communication timer for each of the messaging clients set to a predetermined value that, when expired, will put the messaging client into an unknown state in which it is not receptive to receiving presence information from each of the other messaging clients.

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16. The system of claim 14, wherein the messaging clients further comprise:

means for detecting a trigger signal indicating that the messaging client should be put into an unknown state in which it is not receptive to receiving presence information from each of the other messaging clients.

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17. The system of claim 14, wherein the messaging clients further comprise:

means for transmitting presence information directly from each of the plurality of messaging clients to the other messaging clients without using an intermediate server.

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18. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

an intermediate server system for receiving and storing presence information in a data store for each of the plurality of messaging clients;

the intermediate server system processing the presence information in the
5 data store to determine whether or not to propagate presence information for the plurality of messaging clients to each of the individual messaging clients represented by the presence information in the data store.

10 19. The system of claim 14, further comprising:

each of the plurality of messaging clients having a buddy list of other messaging clients with which the messaging client is interested in communicating with; and

wherein when the messaging client is in a state in which it is receptive to
15 receiving presence information, then obtaining presence information for each of the other messaging clients on the buddy list.

20. The system of claim 14, wherein the network is a wide area wireless network.

21. The system of claim 14, wherein the presence information is communicated between the plurality of messaging clients via a proxy server coupled to the network.

5 22. The system of claim 21, wherein the proxy server maintains a presence information database storing current presence information for each of the plurality of messaging clients.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the proxy server propagates presence
10 information to each of the plurality of messaging clients unless the presence information database indicates that a particular messaging client is in a state indicating that it is not receptive to receiving presence information.

24. The system of claim 14, wherein the presence information transmitted to the
15 messaging client is associated with other messaging clients whose state is known.